

Section 6: Energy Conservation

6/10/2010

The State Energy Office in the North Carolina Department of Commerce received three large grant awards for energy conservation under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: The Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant, funded at just under \$20 million, the State Energy Plan, funded at \$70 million, and the Energy Star Appliance Rebate Program, funded at almost \$9 million.

Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grants (\$18.9 million)

The North Carolina Energy Office has broken these funds into four categories and programs -- government, education, transportation and greenhouse gas -- described below. Also, because potential recipients often have little or no experience with energy efficiency or competitive grants, Recovery funds were to have been used to provide technical assistance to them. A strategic energy plan was a requirement for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant applications. An RFP was issued to solicit firms that would provide a preliminary energy survey, detailed energy survey, assistance in preparation of a strategic energy plan, assistance in completing the application and to provide measurement and verification upon completion of the project. The program has provided almost 300 local governments and education units with a strategic energy plan. Comments have been received by some of the recipients that they had no idea they were wasting as much energy as the report showed. Even those that had not received grants noted they now have a road map on how to effectively tackle wasted energy, which translates to wasted tax dollars, in this tight economy. The plans can also be used to apply for other non-Energy Office grants, such as those offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Department of Energy has requested that 80% of EECBG funds be allocated by June 30, 2010.

Governmental (\$7.15 million) & Educational (\$6.3 million)

In an effort to provide the money to recipients as quickly as possible, the RFP for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) targeting local governments and public educational organizations was issued with four closing dates – Dec. 14, 2009, Dec. 31, 2009, Jan. 15, 2010 and Feb. 2, 2010. Maximum award was \$200,000. These grants focused on low wealth counties, high unemployment areas, saving energy, creating or retaining jobs and encouraging intergovernmental cooperation. A total of 137 proposals were received from cities and counties and another 96 from schools and community colleges.

Transportation (\$2.5 million)

The transportation RFP has been written and is in final review. It is designed to provide project support for energy-efficient street lighting and traffic light synchronization that leads to reduced idling and emissions.

Greenhouse Gas (\$2.5 million)

The greenhouse gas program is focused on collecting methane at municipal landfills and water treatment plants for energy. Maximum award is \$1,000,000. Nine applications were received and are under review.

State Energy Program (\$70.8 million)

State Energy Program (SEP) funds were broken into the categories described below. The original U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) approved plan required modifications in accordance with the General Assembly directives. All SEP funds must be under contract by September 30, 2010.

Main Street (\$2.5 million)

The Main Street offering builds on the existing Main Street Program coordinated by the Division of Community Assistance in the N.C. Department of Commerce. This RFP was divided into two openings. The first round concluded and awards have been made to eight projects, obligating more than \$330,000. A notice of intent to post an RFP for the second has been issued. Technical Assistance is being provided to Main Street Communities as they develop energy plans, audit buildings, and write proposals.

Commercial Renewables (\$4 million)

Almost 100 proposals have been received for the commercial renewables project. Eighteen projects that will receive \$2.3 million in Recovery funds have been approved and are awaiting formal announcement. Additional projects are pending U.S. Energy Department review and approval.

Workforce Development (\$6.85 million)

Funds will be used to provide internships and fellowships for college students and recent graduates with organizations in the energy efficiency and renewable energy fields. Grants have been awarded.

Building codes (\$1 million)

Funds in this category are focused on training building code inspectors in the commercial and residential building energy code. The program will be closely coordinated with the North Carolina Department of Insurance, inside their regulatory and inspection system. The RFP has been issued and the RFP period will close July 13.

Revolving Loan Fund (\$5 million)

The anticipated program involves working with local banks and providing the funds for loans. Other options include providing a loan loss reserve or loan guarantee as a way to increase the effectiveness of the funds.

Technical Assistance (\$3.7 million)

These funds are being used to provide technical assistance in the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant and Main Street programs. As described above, more than 30 technical assistance providers were qualified and contracted by the N.C. Energy Office to provide services to bidders. It has provided assistance and guidance to groups that had little or no concept of energy savings opportunities. The technical assistance provided to local governmental entities may be used to leverage additional federal and state grants.

Government, Universities and State Agencies (\$12 million)

These funds are for energy efficiency in state-owned facilities in keeping with SB 668, which requires that state facilities be 30% more efficient. Funds have been awarded to the UNC system and state agencies.

Energy Efficiency for Existing Single Family, Multifamily, & Small Non-Profits (\$7 million)

The RFP (\$6 million) is designed to provide significant energy savings for homeowners and non-profits by working with contractors throughout the state. It will be closely coordinated with the gas and electric utility companies. RFP# 200901519, "Energy Efficiency for Existing Single Family & Multi-Family Housing" was issued and will close on June 30.

New Residential (\$3.5 million)

The RFP for this program will call for ENERGY STAR labeling of homes, with additional scoring credit for homes that go beyond those levels. Appalachian State University and Systems Building Alliance, a nonprofit, were selected to manage the program. Appalachian State University will receive \$2.6 million to focus on site-built single-family and multi-family home energy efficiency improvements. Systems Building Research Alliance, originally incorporated in North Carolina, will receive \$1.1 million to focus on manufactured homes built to federal standards (HUD Code), addressing energy efficiency improvements.

Energy Efficiency for Small Business, Industry and Non-Profits (\$5 million)

This program will be designed to provide significant energy savings and job creation for contractors working with the businesses to improve building efficiency.

Energy Efficiency for Cities, Counties and Schools (\$4.5 million)

This RFP focuses on low wealth and high unemployment counties to provide energy savings, job creation and retention, and intergovernmental cooperation to achieve greater results. Technical Assistance will continue to be available to assist the local governmental and educational entities throughout the state.

Green Business Fund (\$10 million)

The Green Business Fund is working through a multi-step process to award funds. The first round of awards has been made and was directed to projects that were not funded by a previous effort of state resources. These awards are currently going through U.S. Department of Energy review for compliance with the multiple federal rules. The second round of funding is mid-way through the process. About 600 pre-proposals were received in the first round. Of those, 170 have passed and have been offered the opportunity to complete a full proposal. Copies of news releases, attached.

Alternative Fuels (\$4 million)

The focus of this project is to increase the demand for alternative fuels in North Carolina through demonstration and deployment of alternative fuel vehicles. Projects that support infrastructure, consumer purchases, education and outreach for biofuels will also be solicited.

BioTechnology Center (\$500,000)

Energy efficiency improvements to the center have been recommended.

BioFuels Center (\$950,000)

Energy efficiency improvements to the center (\$576,750) and providing public education (\$376,250) in the area of biofuels have been recommended.

Ocean Wind Energy Analysis (\$300,000)

Wind energy study conducted by UNC-CH

N.C. ENERGY STAR Appliance Replacement and Rebate Program (\$8.8 million)

The appliance rebate program is targeted to get energy efficient appliances and technologies into homes and stimulate the market for these products. North Carolina developed the program in two phases. In Phase 1, ENERGY STAR-qualified refrigerators, freezers, dishwashing machines and clothes washing machines were provided with a 15% in-store rebate. Phase 1 of the appliance rebate program took place April 22-25. In this phase, more than 54,400 appliances were sold and \$7 million of the available funds were exhausted.

In Phase 2, the ENERGY STAR-qualified white goods were eligible to receive a rebate and HVAC improvements and ENERGY STAR water heaters were also eligible for rebates. The rebate in Phase 2 was conducted via a reservation and mail-in mechanism. Phase 2 began June 1, and all funds were expended by the end of the first week.

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